SINCUS NEWS

THE SINCLAIR
COMPUTER
USERS
SOCIETY-SINCUS‡   P.O. Box 36   Johnson City, NY 13790

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INSIDE:

SEE THERE — IT'S FREE!!!

SINCUS MEETINGS
THIRD WEDNESDAY
VESTAL LIBRARY

PRINTing the President

BY PAUL HILL

Our meeting agenda for Wednesday, January 18 will feature the
selection of software that the club will be buying. To aid in the
selection process, you will have to decide what you want, pick it out
and bring with you names, address, price, and any background informa-
tion you have on the program(s) you want us to buy. A selection by
the individual who wants "games" or "utilities" or "finances" must
have some other info with it, as name and address to identify it from
any other ten programs of the same name. The first ballot will deter-
mine which ones we will consider. Similar types wll be grouped together
A discussion period will follow. A second vote will determine final
choice. At this point anyone having the same or a similar program who
would like to make a copy for the club library should make this known.

Once software is received by the library the distribution process
will begin. Initally the process will start by dividing the society
into four groups of ten each. This will give each mmber approximately
three days to get, use, and pass on the program. A group list of mem-
bers will follow each program. As the process works out the groups
can fine tune the method to benefit the members. The fewer rules the
better, the fairer to one the better for all. In the beginning the list
will be broken down geographically, but as time goes on other groups
could be built on other convenient factors.

As the majority of the club votes so goes the selection. As more
members pick up the 2068, more votes will go to that software and the
81's, 1000's, and 1500's will become the minority. A 2000 sub-group
might considering forming now. Discussion of this option should be
held on January 18.

If you've turned in your survey-thank you very much. If you have
not - then please do so. This is your chance to express your choices
as to directions you want the club to take. If you can't find yours
just ask for one when you arrive at the meeting! The results will be
posted next month - the information gives me a better handle on what to
plan for meetings.

Saturday meetings did not seem to gather much support. I will be
open to help anyone run Saturday meetings if enough people are inter-
ested in coming.

The Vestal Library seems to be our best meeting site. The few
electric outlets is offset by NO stairs plus cooler in the summer.
The room is free to us; so we must be careful to obey all of the rules
and leave the room as we find it.

Anyone wishing to help with the club library or this newsletter
just come up to see me at the meeting!

Any ideas for a club project? Any of these sound good?
   Teaching computer to kids.   Hardware project-everyone builds
   Teaching computer to adults.   a common project
   Home computer show.   Machine code use instructions
The following have already been suggested as software purchases:
   Synchro-sette (6 cassettes and 12 letters a year) $39.50
   FORTH(Forth-79 sub-set:10K left of 16K) $26.00
   RPNZL(programming system uses 6K)similar to Forth   29.95
   The Complete TS Basic Course (Gladstone)   24.95
   Fastload(software .5K,6 times faster)(Gladstone)   19.95
   Subscriptions (how would we distribute?)
   FINALLY-many thanks to Wes Brzozowski who is resigning in antici-
pation of being a new dad!! Congratulations, Wes, and thanks for your

(continued next page)

PRESIDENT's column (continued)

many contributions. Wes has been the Recording Secretary. He also
has been an untiring speaker at almost every meet we have had, we are
fortunate to have had the opportunity to hear Wes on so many subjects,
from the history of computers to classes on machine code. I have
counted on Wes many times in the past, and he always came through with
a talk that had everyone sitting up, smiling and listening. So, again,
Wes thanks a bunch and congratulations from all of us.

We will need volunteers for the nominations committee. The elec-
tion process starts next month. Wes Brzozowski's resignation as Re-
cording Secretary requires we fill that position now. According to
the constitution elections are to be held within sixty days to fill out
the remainder of the term until May of 84. If a motion is made to fill
the vacancy by appointment, we can bypass the charter. An ammendment
to the charter regarding such shortterm elections might be considered
and then voted on in May.

Back on the software distribution plan - how can we do it so the
same people are not always last?

Anyone with anything from the club library - please return it. If
you have copies to donate - see Hal Sohn.

Finally - this next meeting should really move - come early! The
2068 will be there with a real color monitor. But that will only be
a sidelight to the feature - Jerry Kendrick's suped up ZX-81! You'll
have to look under the hood of this baby! Jerry will demo a couple
of software Cosmos and a Hi-res Word Processor (64 columns!). You
will be very impressed with his demo I am sure.

Until Wednesday the 18th, se you there!!

Paul Hill
PRESIDENT
SINCUS
P.O. Box 36
Johnson City, New York 13790

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CLASSIFIED ADS

COMPUTERS & CHRSTAL BALLS

by Wes Brzozowski, SINCUS

When we talk about the future of home computing, we like to paint a rosy picture. This is well and good, since that bright future may mostly come to pass. However, the recent bankrupcy of Osborne, and the decision by Texas Instruments to drop its 99/4A computer reminds us that there's a dark side as well.

T.I. was a victim of the recent price-cutting war between the makers of small computers. One problem was that they reportedly dropped their prices before learning how to <u>produce</u> their computer profitably for that price. Then again, their software and accessories were quite expensive, perhaps to compensate. Their users were not impressed.

The Osborne computer is a bit out of our class, but it seems they waited too long to develop new products. When the competition moved ahead, they had troubles.

These problems may seem a bit remote to us, but they tell an important lesson. The small computer business is fiercely competitive, and the makers cannot afford <u>any</u> mistakes. Those that do become the new dinosaurs of the computer age. What does this have to do with us? TIMEX is doing OK, isn't it? Let's take a look.

The TS 1000 has about had it in the marketplace, and TIMEX realized that, long ago. As a result, they developed the TS 1500, 2048, and 2068 as replacements. The fact that they dropped the 2048 before ever introducing it suggests that they didn't forecast the market quite properly.

Although it's nice to the TS 1000 user, the TS 1500 is something of a surprise. The trend in competing "low end" computers is to include color; here, TIMEX has introduced a brand new <u>black</u> <u>and</u> <u>white</u> <u>machine</u>! I've observed that the little Radio Shack color computer, with a 16K RAM pack, can be had for the same price, and is being advertised aggressively. With all the independent vendos, the TS 1500 has a much larger selection of software and accessories, but how will the first time computer buyer know that? All that's obvious is that any Radio Shack store will gladly demonstrate their machine, but the TS 1500 is all but invisible. Some of this is because TIMEX alienated many of its retailers by cutting their profit margins during the price wars. (Remember when you could buy TS 1000's all over the Triple Cities, and then, just as suddenly, no one would carry them?) If you were considering a first computer, would you order a black and white machine, sight unseen, or a color computer,which you could first try out at a local store?

If my analysis is correct, (and I'm the first to admit that I may have missed some important point), it's difficult to see why TIMEX is going ahead with the machine. One possible reason may stem from all the new TS 1000 software TIMEX has introduced. Since the TS 1000 is obsolete, they will lose a lot of their investment if they can't sucessfuly market the compatable machine. The TS 1500 could be an attempt to keep their software saleable.

An interesting sideline to this subject: the December issue of SYNTAX mentions "... the UK press report Sinclair's disappointment with results in the US market...." The article also contains a cryptic message that suggests that managerial changes in TIMEX's computer business are going right up to the VP level. (ED note — Dan Ross has been let go as head of TIMEX Computer Corporation-see article LPRINT: Changes at the Top of TIMEX")

Because the message is so obscure, I can't be sure that this is what it means. (If it's the result of a rumor, the editors might be reluctant to say it outright). If it's true, however, the TS 1500 may be the next casualty. This would leave only the TS 2068.

The 2068 is a beautiful machine. I'm sure most of us were very impressed by the demonstrations that Gary Ennis has been giving. Now the 2068 is a highly upgraded version of Sinclair's ZX Spectrum, and the Spectrum has sold very well in England. Shouldn't we expect the 2068 to do likewise? It's not quite that simple.

When Sinclair introduced its ZX-81, (later to become the TS 1000) there were absolutely no comparable machines available from "the competition". Nowhere could such a computer be had for such a low price. This is a recipe for success; its popularity soared. Sinclair's later introduction of the Spectrum occurred at an excellent time. Low cost color computers were a very new thing, and the name Sinclair was well known among those considering a low cost computer. Added to the fact its a good machine, another recipe for success was produced.

Timing has been very important when a new computer market opened up. The "early birds" became the leaders, by default. Therefore, the storekeepers would stock them, therefore more people would buy them, encouraging more storekeepers to carry them, so more people would see them, there'd more sales.....

The cycle feeds on itself, with continued growth breeding continued growth. An analagous cycle also follows, whereby "outside vendors", looking to cash in on the computer's success, produce their own software and accessories for the machine. The more successful the machine, the more outside vendors will attach themselves to it. This additional selection of options contributes to the computer's success, and so the cycle continues...

The moral to this story is that if you get into the market early you get an incredible advantage. Latecomers may still make a go of it, but they'll have to give the customer a very good incentive to buy their products. They might have superior performance, lower cost, more accessories, nicer appearance... but they must have something!

Now, into a market dominated by the Commodore 64, swarming with various Ataris, and littered with the bodies of the "also rans", TIMEX has entered the TS 2068. The first time computer buyer, if he or she has even heard of the 2068, has no reason not to buy the similarly priced competing brands instead. After all, they're well known there's plenty of software available, and you can swap programs with your neighbors who also have the same machine.

The Commodores and Ataris are stocked and well advertised by many local dealers, whereas the 2068 is handled by Sears (which also sells and prominantly displays Commodores and Ataris).

TIMEX can probably count on some loyalty from TS 1000 users who decide to upgrade their system, (I'd probably buy the 2068 if I decided to upgrade), but it's unlikely that a large percentage of TS1000 users will do this. One clue suggests that TIMEX agrees. For quite some time, a program has been available in England to load ZX-81 tapes into the Spectrum, and to translate the programs into something roughly compatible. Most programs wouldn't run directly, but at least the conversion job only requires editing, not retyping the full program. One would expect TIMEX to offer a similar program if they expected a large number of TS 1000 users to upgrade, but they don't seem to be doing so. (Note an independent vendor does offer the program).

COMPUTERS AND CRYSTAL BALLS (continued)

There is some hope, however. The upcoming modem, and, especially, the low cost disk drive, could carve out a market niche for the 2068. to fill, if it's not already to late. Nevertheless, without a lot of advertising, a larger number of retail dealers, lots of software, and those new accessories, _fast_, the 2068 may not be available long.

Those of us not contemplating a new computer still have cause for concern. If the 1500 and 2068 don't do well, TIME might decide to leave the computer business. With them could go their software, accessories, and customer support. With no new units sold, the US magazines for our computers would suffer, since they constantly need new subscriptions to replace those that expire. As those magazines vanished, we'd lose our vehicle for the exchange of ideas, and a lot of independent vendors, deprived of suitable advertising space, would switch their efforts to more marketable computers. For users of TIMEX Sinclair computers, the future could be very lean, indeed.

As an afterword, I'd like to say that I sincerely hope I'm wrong. I've done lots of speculating to reach the conclusions presented here, and an entire line of reasoning may collapse under one incorrect assumption. If you think you've spotted some, or you have other ideas of your own, please, PLEASE, write them up and send them to Gary Ennis EDITOR, Sincus - 119 Liberty Street, Owego, New York 13827.

He'll be glad to get your contributions, we'll all enjoy a bit of controversy in the newsletter, and, to tell the truth, I'd rather have a more optimistic outlook on the future of the TIME-Sinclair line. Remember, don't get mad - WRITE!!!!!

BY Wes Brzozowski, SINCUS

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LPRINT: Changes at the Top of TIMEX

dateline - October 1983 CATS NEWSLETTER (Capital Area TIME/Sinclair Users Group (D.C. area).

Timex has laid off another group -- including Sue Mahoney.
ED. NOTE - Sue was Technical Support Manager and, I believe, joined TIME from Sinclair Research. She is very active in the T/S group in the Boston Computer Society.

dateline - December 1983 Sinclair-TIME User Group Newsletter, Boston Computer Society

VP ROSS RELEASED BY TIME

Dec. 5 --Dan Ross, Timex Marketing Vice President and national spokesman for the Timex Sinclair Computer line, was released from his post late last week. Ross, longtime veteran of the computer industry, was said to be surprised and shaken by the sudden action.

Unofficial sources within Timex say that Ross will remain with the company for the next two months as a consultant and that this move is part of yet another structural reshuffling of this international company's computer operation.

TIMEXLY TIPS

THANKS & A SCROLL OF THE SCREEN TO
BARON'S MICROCOMPUTING REPORTS DEC. 1983

MAKE YOUR 2068 USER FRIENDLY - ADD A BEEP TO
YOUR KEYSTROKE!! POKE 23609,255. SHORTEN
THE BEEP BY POKEing A SMALLER NUMBER.

EXCELLENT BOOKS

MASTERING YOUR TIMEX SINCLAIR 1000
PERSONAL COMPUTER

by Tim Hartnell & Dilwyn Jones
BANTAM BOOKS $3.95

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO TIMEX-SINCLAIR
HOME COMPUTERS

by PETER MORSE, IAN ADAMSON, BEN ANTREF & BRIAN HANCOCK
SIMON SCHUSTER $8.95

GAMES FOR YOUR TIMEX-SINCLAIR 2000

by PETER SHAW
DELL PUBLISHING $5.95

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IF YOU DIDN'T GET ONE FOR CHRISTMAS

GO CHECK THEM OUT AT THE BOOKSTORE

2K EXPRESS by Gary Ennis

<u>TECHNICAL ADVANCES IN NEWSLETTER!!</u> After months of problems I am very
pleased to observe and report a newsletter slightly late, but other-
wise without production problems of the past. Yes, I know I misspelled
"Crystal" as "CHrystal"! I was so excited to get a full page of copy
after manually punching out at least 1,000 holes in the mimeograph
machine drum (they had plugged up with dried ink because our pad went
bad) I just went ahead and started to run that page before I realized
I had not yet put in the title by hand. Well, if I mispelled Crystal
on an ink covered stencil we'll just have to live with CHRSTAL 1!
<u>MUCH THANKS TO PAUL HILL</u> - for his tireless efforts to relay the mimeo-
graph machine drum pads to me out here in Owego. Also Paul is the art-
ist and producer of the electronic stencil that produced the front page
headline of 'SINCUS NEWS'. Hope you like pink because I have nearly
500 copies on pink paper!! Thanks again Paul, I never doubted your
faith in our ability to get out a decent product. Now with the new
stencil technique our problems should be behind us. SINCUS NEWS should
arrive ten to twelve days prior to the monthly meeting.
<u>THANKS TO WES BRZOZOWSKI</u>-and congratulations I trust. Wes article is
thought provoking and I will be interested in your thoughts. Some of
my reactions and thoughts are on the next page.
<u>HELP WANTED</u> - people to review software and books. If you have a book
or program that you really like please write down the things you like
about it. If it is a program, how do you use it? Did you get enough
documentation (i.e. explanation of how to use the program). Pretty
soon you've got an article! Santa brought me a dictionary so I can
help with the spelling - so long as it's not crystal! Really, everyone
needs to know what programs work and what ones are duds. If you've
got one you like - just tell us why.
<u>LOST IN THE SHUFFLE</u> - if you are a member of WSKG bug them to run a
TV show about computers - it is out of San Francisco I believe - the
name escapes me for the moment - its 'BITS, BYTES, AND BUZZWORDS'
<u>WANTED</u>-information on The Source a telecommunications resource that
competes with Compuserve, etc. The Timex-Sinclair 2050 MODEM comes
with membership in the Source!
<u>QUESTION</u> - I haven't time to figure it out. Is CP/M based on the Z80?
<u>ARCADE GAME CHALLENGE</u> - any of you 2000 owners beat 12,000 on the new
arcade game 'Androids'? We'll have to keep a running scoreboard of
high scores for the various games. Scores can be verified by someone
in the family and winners could receive prizes after a playoff of the
top three scorers.
<u>BIG HELP WANTED</u> -- THE DL TIPS is drying up because I am daily involved
with my 2000 now. Feed all of those little brain twisters and such
to continue that page of our newsletter. Take it a short routine, a
problem section, a good game, whatever you have found useful.
<u>BAD NEWS, GOOD NEWS</u> don't waste your $5 by sending it to the usually
very reliable E. Arthur Brown for the technical data on the Microdrive
if you have access to the Nov/Dec 1983 issue of SYNC. But do write E.
Arthur Brown, 1702 Oak Knoll Drive, Alexandria, MN 56308 for their new
catalog and price list on TIE -Sinclair products. Don't order the tech
sheet on the TS 2000 either.
<u>MARKETING KNOWHOW</u> - I believe the General Electric tape recorder just
released as a 'Computer Data Recorder' is identical to my model 3-5157A

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ON TIMEX AND TODAY AND TOMORROW

Wes Brzozowski raises some serious questions in his article starting on page 4. In November I wrote that the six companies that are making money at the end of 1984 will probably be the big six in the home computer market in the eighties - when it will see tremendous growth. By the end of the decade those companies will be vulnerable to being beaten out by more advanced models. They will have an enviable position if they are able to prove their reliability over the next twenty four months. That would mean their introduction of a next generation machine would be more readily accepted. Unless someone brings out a 256K machine with a 13' color monitor that costs $300 and folds up into my briefcase I still stand with my prediction. This does not mean that a company will fold - they may choose, as TI did, to get out of the game.

First, let's look at the person who buys this home computer. He or she probably will not be using a computer at work YET. But they may have grown up with a TIMEX watch.

Next, having worked for a TIMEX watch center I know that TIMEX builds a heck of a product and backs it up on the spot. We gave free service for a year! Although I observed some communication breakdowns in a new factory service program, generally speaking TIMEX seemed to do okay by its factory store. It did dismay us to see Timex products sold at substantial discounts by competitors. We knew, however, that those models were usually limited in number and often last years styles. So now you know why Timex dropped the price on the TS 1000 the way it did. Timex may not have considered the 'selling time' its own stores were investing and non-Timex stores were discounting the unit from the start so the retail end was a bit of a mess. Certainly TIMEX alienated the retailers - they cut the announced retail price to below the wholesale price!! Stores were caught with $99 units (which they paid $70-74 for) and faced an announced retail price of $75 then $69 then $49!! TIMEX was clearing out its outmoded stock in anticipation of the release of the 2000 in early spring of 1983. Except they pulled the 2000 back! Why did they pull the 200 back? I wish we knew for sure. I have a theory-they made the same mistake everyone else makes in this industry. TIMEX watch catalogs seemed to be about two months ahead of schedule at best. The TS1000 was a couple months late!! The 2000 was 6 months late I saw the 2068 in the Sears catalog. When I ordered it, I was told I could expect delivery on November 15. I actually got it on November 12. Coleco's inability to deliver 'Adam' may be offset as a company by their sale of 'Cabbage Patch Dolls'. I still think a lot of people bought Atari's that were Atari 400 or 800 thinking they'll do what the 1600 will do. So what is TIMEX doing? Here is my scenario.

The idea of a cartridge loading home computer gave them an edge that TI never capitalized on. What to do with all of the cases for the 'Spectrum' - well everyone was complaining about the 16K RAM and the keyboard. We've got this new bank switching hardware that gives the Z80 a total memory capacity of 16 megabytes - SO let's package the TS1000 in a Spectrum case with bank switching and then push the 1300 for schools and as a telecommunications computer (remember most STATES do not have a program where schools received IBM systems or the state supported the purchase of Apples-as they apparantly did in New York).

FINALLY-remember that HALF the name is Sinclair 9it is the reason we are called SINCUS not TIMCUS! Sinclair has sold more computers than anyone in the world! TIMEX builds them and has the US license. The machine will remain for sale in the USA somehow. NEXT MONTH IS